

SSG Matthew J. West

Army EOD Team Leader

KIA August 30, 2010



Bronze Star (2)

Purple Heart

Army Commendation Medal (2)

Joint Service Commendation Medal

Army Good Conduct Medal (2)

National Defense Medal

Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Stars (2 stars)

Iraq Campaign with Bronze Star

Global War on Terrorism

Non Commissioned officer Professional Development Ribbon

Army Service Ribbon

Overseas Service Ribbon (2)

NATO Medal

Badges include the following:

Meritorious Unit Commendation

Combat Action Badge

Special Skills Basic Marksmanship

Qualification Badge

Rifle Expert Badge

Kristine M. Willis
5770 North Pleasantview Road
Levering, Michigan 49755

April 27, 2011

Dear State Representatives,

Good Afternoon! I am writing on behalf of the "Gold Star Families" of Michigan. I cannot express to you how much the "Gold Star Family License Plate" means to the Gold Star Families of Michigan. On August 30, 2010 my Brother SSG Matthew J. West was KIA in Afghanistan. He was killed with 4 other soldiers; Spc. Chad Clements, Capt. Dale Gotez, SSG Kevin Kessler, SSG Jesse Infante by a roadside bomb (IED). Our families are now united by this horrible accident, and we all became a part of a Gold Star Family on this day.

The Gold Star License Plate is about spreading awareness. There are a lot of individuals who do not know what a Gold Star is, and the sacrifice that was made for this honor. I bet there are individuals in this room who really don't know the background of a Gold Star. I can honestly say that I was clueless. I had no idea that my brother's sacrifice would cause so much pain, pride, and sorrow. I always thought that this wouldn't happen to my family that my brother would always be there. I guess you could say that I took this for granted.

It is time for the State of Michigan to show respect to the Families of Fallen Soldiers, the incredible sacrifice their family made, and spread awareness of this issue. No one really knows what a Fallen Soldier's Family goes through until it happens to themselves. I know there is the issue of having too many personalized plates, but how can you compare the "Gold Star Plate" to a college plate. Being a part of the Military is as American as anyone can be, and we should show are support.

I'm sadden with how long this process has been, and Michigan is among "4" states that do not have a "Gold Star License Plate". Maine, Michigan, Hawaii, and D.C. are the only states that do not have a "Gold Star License Plate". Let us show others that Michigan supports our Military, and the sacrifice these families have been brought upon. These soldiers Gave their Life for Our Freedom.

Here is a little information about my brother SSG Matthew J. West. My brother was born and raised in Michigan. He was a 1992 Graduate of Gaylord High School and Graduated College from Northern Michigan University in 1997. My brother began his Military career in 2004 at the age of 30. At his time of his death, he was an EOD Team Leader for the 62nd Ordnance Company, 71st EOD Group based in Fort Carson, Colorado. My brother was planning on making the military a career, and following the chain of command within the EOD. He was already an E6, and would have been an E7 after he returned home from Afghanistan. Matt

was married, had 3 small children under the age of 5, Parents John and Marcia West, and I was his only sibling. I don't think our family will ever be the same.

Before you vote on the Gold Star License Plate, please take a minute and think about our families. What if this was your Husband or Wife, your Son or Daughter, and in my case a Brother or Sister? How would you like for them to be remembered? What greater honor than to spread this awareness and the sacrifices they made.

Please vote for the Gold Star License Plate, and honor all the fallen soldiers in Michigan and their families. Thank you for your time, and have a wonderful day.

Sincerely,

Kristine Willis

Proud Sister of SSG Matthew J. West

KIA August 30, 2010 Afghanistan